FACULTY OF EDUCATION

ORAL EXAMINATION

EDITH KIRKPATRICK

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

EdD

EdD

Tuesday, July 17, 2012
SFU Vancouver, Room 2200 at 10:00 AM

EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Chair: Dr. David Paterson

Senior Supervisor: Dr. Geoff Madoc-Jones
Co-Supervisor: Dr. Bruce Beairsto
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External Examiner: Dr. Evert Lindquist

School of Public Administration
University of Victoria
From Government Department to Independent, Business-Focused, Not-for-Profit Corporation: The Experience of Leading through Transition in the Creation of the British Columbia Safety Authority

ABSTRACT

On April 1, 2004, British Columbia’s Safety Engineering Services branches were combined into a single non-governmental regulatory authority. This research articulates the experience of leading through this transition, as articulated by the organizational elite, and examines that experience with the aid of Giddens’ Structuration Theory.

Thirteen members of the group of highly experienced organizational elite who led this transformative change process participated in one-on-one interviews. Analysis of this collective narrative revealed challenges and considerations from which others contemplating similar transition processes can benefit.

Many of the experiences articulated are common to any major organizational change and include clarity of vision, mission and values, effective communication, and strategic planning. Those that emerged as particular to transitions out of government relate to the importance of planning, the impact of existing culture on attempts to re-culture the organization, and stakeholder relations.

Investigation and planning for change, unencumbered by political ideology, and taking enough time to include stakeholders were critical to success in this transition. Recognizing that government and private sector cultures are different, and developing a strategy to support employees to make the change were also important, as was identifying the key stakeholders and establishing and maintaining effective relationships with them. While transition removed government’s control over day-to-day operations, it remained a very important stakeholder.

Structuration Theory, and the framework it offers to assist in understanding the actions of individuals within social entities over time and across space, proved to be a useful and applicable in understanding this experience.

Academic Record

2003 – M.A., University of British Columbia
1994 – B.A., University of British Columbia

Professional Experience

2008 – Present Leader, Education and Awareness Program Development, BC Safety Authority
2007 – 2008 Acting Director, Continuing Studies, Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design
2006 – 2007 Program Manager and Sessional Instructor, Foundations of Academic Literacy Program, Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University
2003 – 2006 Manager, Administration, Finance and Human Resources, Continuing Studies, Simon Fraser University